



National Park Service begins management of non-native invasive plants on Buck Island Reef National Monument

Press Release
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Invasive non-native plant species have the potential to displace native plant species, alter species proportions, alter nutrient and fire patterns, modify geomorphology, hydrology, and biogeochemistry, and reduce recreational use of resources.

On the 176-acre terrestrial portion of Buck Island Reef National Monument invasive non-native plant species' populations are expanding and have the potential to greatly threaten the ecological integrity of the native flora and associated fauna. A recent island-wide vascular plant inventory funded by the National Park Service recorded eight previously undocumented non-native plants that are expanding on the island without human intervention.

To meet the Monument's management objectives and the National Park Service's Organic Act, ten of the nineteen nonnative invasive plants are of immediate concern and are being treated. These plants, which are common to St. Croix and the Virgin Islands, include tan tan, Guinea grass and wild pineapple. They have been introduced and are present on Buck Island. Licensed, trained professionals under NPS contract will treat the plants by hand with approved herbicide. The project began on January 21st and the initial removal will last three weeks. The National Park Service is committed to maintaining and enhancing the natural and cultural resources of Buck Island and will embark on a perpetual invasive nonnative plant maintenance program to ensure these nuisance species do not re-establish and native species are protected.

The immediate goals of control / management of invasive non-native plants on Buck Island are:

1. Treat and manage the populations of ten invasive non-native plants found on Buck Island.
2. Improve island-wide conditions for native flora and fauna including nesting habitat for endangered sea turtles and brown pelicans, threatened least terns, and rare plants.
3. Ensure survival of reintroduced *lignum vitae* trees and restoration of historic landscape.
4. Provide suitable habitat for re-introduction of the St. Croix Ground Lizard (*Ameiva polops*).
5. Increase the awareness of the public and territorial conservation agencies to potential threats from non-native plant species and environmentally sound management practices.

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